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FILE

Durenberger accuses CIA, Reagan aides of data leaks

By Dane Smith
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WASHINGTON — Sen. Dave Durenberger, R-Minn., delivered a stinging counterattack Friday against critics of his performance as Senate Intelligence Committee chairman, saying CIA Director William Casey and White House officials had leaked sensitive intelligence information.

Speaking to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Durenberger said the Reagan administration — not Congress — had been the source of controversial leaks over the past year.

These leaks included press accounts about covert plots against Libya, secrets about Soviet compliance with disarmament treaties and disclosure of a Nicaraguan plan to lobby Congress and the American public, which Durenberger said may have resulted in the arrests of three Nicaraguans as CIA operatives.

The speech was closed to the public, but Durenberger's Washington office released a prepared text.

"Every administration has faced the problem of leaks, but none so much as this one," said Durenberger, who has been criticized by Casey and conservative columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak for divulging intelligence information to the media.

In reference to the columnists, Durenberger said the frequency of sensitive disclosures in their columns "has led to the rumor in Washington that the administration has two hot lines — one to the Kremlin and the other to Evans and Novak."

Evans and Novak blasted Durenberger earlier this year, accusing the moderate Republican and frequent critic of the administration's hard-line foreign policy as "an

open-mouthed engine of publicity."

CIA chief Casey castigated Durenberger last fall for "repeated compromise of sensitive intelligence sources and methods."

President Reagan, too, apparently has sent a letter to Durenberger about his concerns that congressional watchdogs are blowing national secrets.

Durenberger revealed in a meeting with St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch editors earlier this week that he had received a somewhat accusatory, two-page letter from Reagan after the Washington Post reported on an alleged CIA plot to overthrow Libyan strongman Moammar Khadafy several months ago.

Durenberger told the editors that he was wrongly accused of



Durenberger

Casey

leaking information and that the CIA's Casey was "such an avid leaker seeker that it makes a person wonder why and how this stuff is getting out."

Durenberger also said he thought Post reporter Bob Woodward, the author of the Libya story, had a CIA or White House source that was "very, very high."

In the Chicago speech, Durenberger repeated his earlier statements that by criticizing the Intelligence Committee, Casey was actually trying to weaken the committee's oversight powers and discredit its previous criticism of the agency.

"Those who malign the committee ... are, more often than not, seeking to destroy the credibility of the oversight process," he told his Chicago audience.

He said "there is probably nowhere else in Washington" where public officials are more

concerned about protecting secrets than in his Senate committee.

The media in general also took a shot from Durenberger. The "news media are all too willing to be used in return for information," particularly those reporters "who share a common ideology" with those who are leaking the material, Durenberger said.

Because of all the controversy surrounding intelligence issues during 1985 — nicknamed the "Year of the Spy" because of the numerous arrests of Americans charged with selling intelligence secrets — as well as his revelations to Minnesota newspapers of personal problems and a separation from his wife, Durenberger has been the subject of stories in recent weeks by the Washington Post, the Washington Times, and the Chicago Tribune.

In a sense, he is a lame-duck chairman. Senate rules allow no more than eight years on the oversight committee, and Durenberger will step down as chairman next January.